

Down the Ages with Eros, Thanatos and Falsies



"Spring in the Seventies."

IN THE language of Freud, man has two inborn capacities, and each may manifest in a nobler or baser form. There is Eros, which is love and creativity, but also lust; and there is Thanatos, which is hate and destruction, but may also become the power to control and manipulate for useful purposes. . . . The belief that sexual desires and habits are something which can be placed in an airtight compartment, and sealed off from history without affecting the development of the story, is no longer tenable. Eros and Thanatos permeate every compartment of human activity, and a history which attempts to ignore this fact is not merely emasculated but unintelligible."

Thus G. Rattray Taylor in the opening pages of "Sex in History," and thus the interesting burden of four new books, including Mr. Taylor's, at which we take a quick running look on these two pages. The books:

"Sex in History," by G. Rattray Taylor (Vanguard Press, \$5).

"A History of Courting," by E. S. Turner (Dutton, \$3.75).

"The Evolution of Love," by Donald Day (Dial Press, \$5.95).

"Muffs and Morals," by Pearl Binder (a study in the interrelationship of

dress, "decency," and manners, to be published next week by Morrow at \$3.75).

LET'S see what we have here: one really important new book; two in-betweeners—informative and entertaining in-betweeners; and one huge great lump of boilerplate. This last, to dispose of it first, is Mr. Day's cheap-jack-proliferate "Evolution of Love"—and boilerplate, should you happen not to know, is small-town journalism for cornball syndicated material, most of it with a highly commercial slant, which you can cast up (from "mats") at a moment's notice if it's a question of a hole somewhere in the forms that can't otherwise be filled.

The in-betweeners are Mr. Turner's "History of Courting" and Miss Binder's right-little-bright-little treatment of the Eros-Thanatos question in terms of bustles, codpieces, and falsies.

The important book is Mr. Taylor's "Sex in History." Important means serious, adventurous, illuminating. Need I add that serious does not in turn mean grave? On the contrary, I find Mr. Taylor's prose to be a good deal more urbane, alive, and readable than nine-tenths of all the sex-writing we've had since Papa Freud's.

If Freud, as we know, thought of himself primarily as a Conquistador, then Mr. Taylor surely qualifies as an Expert Mapper-and-Charter—not of the psyche but of the symptomology:

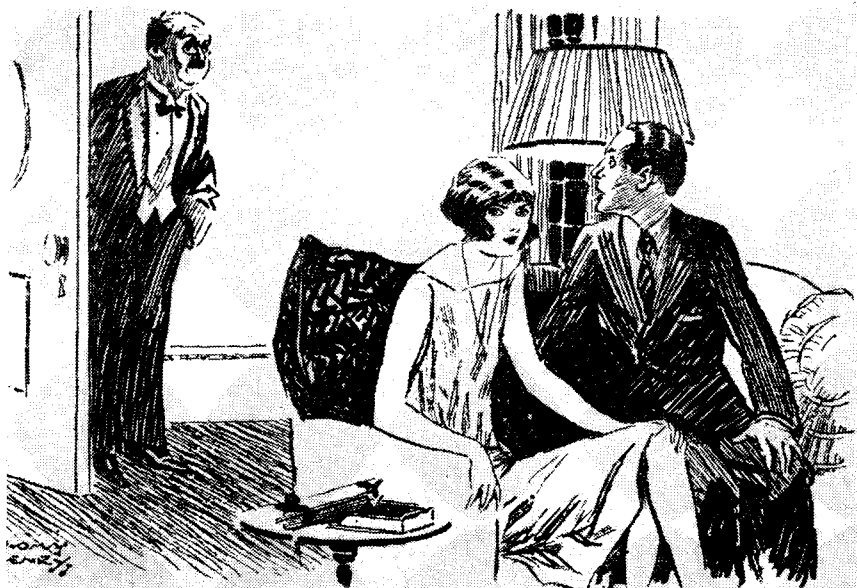
this is how it all *truly* revealed itself the ebbing and flowing of the psych down through all the ages, reigns, an societies; in law, in politics, in literature, in art; in attitudes; in conduct I stress the truly because of the way that Mr. Taylor knocks preconceptions galley-west, all along the route. Just as a sample, take the Restoration an era often described as bawdy, sensual, and licentious. Not so, says our guide, flourishing his evidence: it was a time of debauchery for only a tiny fraction of the population—the king, the court, the handful of people who wrote plays or read them or went to see them; for all the others it was a time of nothing so much as sheer brute sadism—nose smashings and eye-gougings become a public sport, flogging become a national passion. Chace Pine, a roué, devises a machine that can whip forty persons at a time—and sadism is whatever else it is, isn't, but in any event it is certainly not bawdiness.

Like most writers on brash subjects, Mr. Taylor has his own private key, his system. "It will be my thesis in this book that the various changes and contrasts in European [he means Western] sexual behaviour can be systematically accounted for [in terms of the fact] that at certain periods there was a predominating tendency for male children to model themselves on their fathers, and so to produce an authoritarian and restrictive attitude in society as a whole, while



—Illustrations from "A History of Courting."

"An advertiser of the Eighties tries the courting angle: The lady in the hammock has bewitched her suitor by wearing a dress made of 'My Queen' Vel-Vel."



—From "A History of Courting."

favorite theme—from *London Opinion* (1926): Her father (as he goes to bed at 11:45) says, "Give me a call when you go, please. I've got to be up early in the morning."

others there was a tendency to model on the mother, producing a very different attitude. . . . Though I am no great lover of jargon, it would be tedious to refer continually to persons who have modeled themselves on their fathers. I shall therefore refer to them as *patrists*." Those mother-wise-modeled are of course *matrists*. The Restoration was one of many *patrist* eras; in our own time the pendulum is swinging over from *patrism* to *matrism*. Are you listening, Mme. de Beauvoir?

At first glance *patrism*-*matrism* looks very much like warmed-over *patriarchy*-*matriarchy*. But Mr. Taylor has made clear the difference: the old terms refer to *institutions*; he is interested in measuring *attitudes*. Attitudes, as he points out, are always a couple of full beats out ahead of institutions. —JERRY TALLMER.

Up from the Amoeba

• Byron is said to have disliked to see women eating, unless lobster and champagne. Beau Brummell claimed to have broken off an affair because the lady "actually ate cabbage."
—“A History of Courting.”

• There are, of course, other ways for a man to parade his virility in his dress besides flaunting his legs in breeches or displaying a manly codpiece. Henry VIII was so proud of his broad shoulders that he had his doublets built out almost square, a style faithfully copied by his courtiers. Flat cap and jowl-beard squaring off the face further emphasized this bulky look.
—“Muffs and Morals.”

• False breasts (*appas postiches*) were sold in Paris under the poetic name of *suppléants*. In 1803 Moreau de la Sarthe patented a new kind of corset, called *divorces*, which reached no farther than the navel, and which was designed to separate the breasts, an idea which is now once again in fashion after a hundred and fifty years, under the American title of “cleavage.” —“Muffs and Morals.”

• Of the actual “business” of courtship and love-making what did Hollywood contribute? It showed boys how to walk with girls, how to pilot them in public places, how to chaff, flatter, and rally them. It taught them how to hold a girl, how long and how tight. It familiarized them with the looks which mean “I won’t be kissed,” “I don’t mind if I’m kissed,” “I want to be kissed,” “Stop it, I like it,” “I like it but stop it,” and a dozen others. On the debit side it popularized the “wolf whistle,” the least lovely of Nature’s courting cries. . . .

The cinema taught girls the peculiar potency of the female eye; how to halt or dismiss a man with a look; how to search his eyes at close quarters (with an engaging left-to-right oscillation of the eyeballs). It indicated some of the uses for eyelids. It taught girls to recognize the symptoms of a kiss coming on, how to parry it, how to encourage it while apparently avoiding it, or how to return it with interest. There is evidence in more than one quarter that the cinema taught girls the trick of closing their eyes when kissed, which one had always supposed to be a natural instinct of women. It encouraged them to kick up one heel (or even

two heels) when embraced. It also taught them how and when to slap.
—“A History of Courting.”

• Fashion is a knife used to draw a firm line between the noble by birth and less so, the richer and the poorer. Extravagance is employed by those above to outwit those below from copying.
—“Muffs and Morals.”

• The significant thing [about the new morality ushered in by World War I] was that though many a woman during these war years “lost her name” yet she was not permanently ruined. For the first time in history the “fallen woman” got up again—a little shaken, a little surprised at herself—and carried on. The thing became a joke; there was a proposal to erect a plaque in a famous London hotel “to the women who fell here during the Great War.” Soon there would be many more jokes.

Courting, as distinct from cohabitation, was by now an activity stripped of protocol and deference. When the box labeled “Sex” had been sprung open the first thing to fly out—though hardly anyone realized it at the time—had been magic. At war’s end the sight of six inches of female leg was still a noteworthy one, and many a girl could have let down enough hair to sit on. Wantonly, as it seemed, a woman now began to throw away the elements of her femininity. She slashed off her hair, ripped several inches from her skirt, lost her hips, and flattened her bosom. Those males who sighed for the frustrations that went with hoops and other defense works were out of luck; rarely had woman worn less armor against “the rash hand of licentiousness.”

—“A History of Courting.”



—From “Muffs and Morals.”

Fop with muff, after Hogarth’s “Taste in High Life (eighteenth century).”

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How Many Worlds?

TOWERING over New York's East River the glass and steel United Nations buildings with its gleaming white assembly hall remains a majestic symbol of the hope of mankind for a united world. The tens of thousands of chattering pilgrims of all ages who visit it every year emerge as quietly or somberly as if they had visited the vast temple of a religion which has given them new hope for the future of mankind. For some time it has been apparent that we have been naive; we are an impatient and hopeful people who expect immediate results and are grievously disappointed when they are not achieved. In the years that have passed since Wendell Willkie returned from his world tour to announce in his "One World" that all people everywhere are good at heart and lovers of peace there have been alarming evidences that we have been deceived and betrayed by vast and threatening forces over which we have no control.

And yet the dream remains, whether it is called One World or World Federalism. We now speak readily of two worlds as if that precarious balance between belligerent Communist states and their satellites and the democratic powers and their allies might be a temporary solution to our dilemma and not a dangerous paradox. Would it not be safer, we are beginning to ask, if there were three and not two worlds, or even more than three? Allies who are bribed with modern weapons and vast sums of money, or satellites dominated by armed forces and a ubiquitous secret police, have never in history remained constantly faithful. India and the smaller states of the Middle East might well be united and armed, defended, if neces-

sary, and gradually brought into the modern world, though they might still cry, "A curse on both your houses." Their indigenous culture, their ancient beliefs might in this way be guarded from the shock and turmoil caused by the overwhelming effect of the impact on them of Western nations and empires. Perhaps this, too, is a dream; but if it should be successful it might lighten the pressures and the fears that torment us day after day.

We know the value in all human life of freedom of speech, and yet we have become so sensitive to the harsh words of men who do not see eye to eye with us, but who would fight to the death against Communist tyranny, that we live in constant apprehension of what they will say next. Like a lovelorn maiden, we are in a state of mind in which we must be admired, loved, and wooed. As an example, the able editor of England's *New Statesman and Nation* wrote in his editorial of this week, "Mr. Malenkov had heard his own pleas for peaceful co-existence contemptuously dismissed by Mr. Dulles as a surrender to the increasing strength of the West, and he has had to watch—in Germany as well as in Formosa—an American policy at work which must have seemed to anyone in Russia an unanswerable proof that any softness on the part of the Kremlin only increases the appetite and raises the demands of the Western Powers." Mr. Crossman is not a Communist, and he may, or may not, believe this upside-down double-talk. He is a member of Parliament who every week furnishes ammunition for the left wing of the Labor Party. He adds that "negotiation through strength" is a mirage and fails to see, like Nehru sometimes, that negotia-

tion through weakness would lead disaster. It is true that negotiating through equality would be sensible. But how does one gauge equality? This is an excellent example of what we must endure with equanimity from our friends and allies. We must grin and bear it! There are worlds within the two worlds of competitive and armed might, worlds of ideas which seem reasonable to many sane people and bitterly harsh and inimical to the majority who fail to understand the reasons behind the words. The reason is often due to the words.

WITHIN thirteen years the people of the United States have rushed with astonishing speed from a half-hearted isolationism to become the great power in the world today. We have learned a great deal more about ourselves and about the outer world in this brief time than in decades of our past history. This extraordinary development has been the result not only of the wider knowledge of our leaders, but of the millions of American tourists and men and women in the armed services who have crossed through the years the Atlantic and the Pacific. We have not yet acquired the deeper wisdom about ourselves that will be demanded of us. Jol La Farge in the latest issue of *The American Scholar* correctly states this sentiment when he wrote, "Our scholars will need to collect and assess the lessons of the past and evaluate various techniques for developing mutual understanding." He is referring to our own people, who do not need to be professors, in their struggle to emancipate us from the weight of our sins against the American Negro though what he says might be applied toward foreign peoples as well. "They will seek a wider and deeper basis of cooperation. They will inquire about the meaning of men's dialogue with one another and whether all human dialogue may not resolve itself into a dialogue with God. We put us here. Sooner or later they will inquire whether there may not be two participants to that dialogue whether it is all Job speaking to God or whether God may not be saying something to Job."

In the past Americans abroad have been liked, partly for their generosity and partly because we are friendly people. We must not now become taskmasters. We must not blame others for their opinions. We must let them live in their own worlds without the fear that too many foreigners have of our motives. If we can understand why we may appear to them to be arrogant and dangerous the world may at last rest in peace. —H. S.